

# BLACK LIBERATION ARMY POLITICAL DICTIONARY

**Revolution:** A complete and radical change from one social system to another; the violent and complete struggle waged by the people to rid themselves of an oppressive system of government into a more progressive and humane society. This includes not only the political structure, but also the philosophy and ideology, mode of production, relations of production, as well as the spiritual and social mentality and outlook of society.



An excerpt from the  
*Collected Works of the Black  
Liberation Army*  
Published by The Rookery Press



## **POLITICAL DICTIONARY**

**Absolute Equalitarianism:** The narrow and fixed view that “all things are equal” and that every situation, person or policy should be approached and dealt with in a uniform manner regardless of the actual circumstances, conditions and need. Also spelled as “absolute egalitarianism”.

**Agent Provocateur:** One who joins a group in order to encourage its members to commit illegal acts which they are then busted for. They pretend to be sympathetic toward the aims of the group that they infiltrate.

**Amerikan Ideology:** Economic development regardless of the cost to human beings; a few advancing at the expense of everyone else, and all whites advancing on the backs of Black people and other peoples of color.

**Anarchism:** The philosophy of total freedom without any governmental structure or state. It rejects the necessity of a dictatorship of the proletariat to re-educate and organize the masses and protect the gains of the revolution as a transitory stage in the development towards true Communism, when the state will have withered away.

**Automation:** The process of using mechanical or electronic machines to do routine repetitive work automatically instead of employing human hands and minds.

**Black:** A political designation to refer not only to Afro-Americans but to people of color who are engaged in revolutionary work in the U.S. and all over the world. It should not be taken to mean the domination of Afro-Americans upon other people of color or the exclusion of them from Black revolutionary organizations.

**Black Collaborator:** Those few Black people brought into the capitalist system at various levels, including such high levels as Black capitalists, project directors, administrators, etc., who have enough of a stake in the operation of the system to cooperate in pacification programs against their Black kin.

**Black Revolutionary Power:** The taking of state power by Black Amerikans in order to revolutionize the entire country on the basis of their enriched concept of being.

**Bourgeoisie:** The rich and super rich. They are the ruling elite who own and manage the means of production, and the real rulers in a capitalist society. They dictate policy, and have the common people working for them or enslaved by them under threat of violence, starvation or death.

trial-and-error reactions into purposeful, planned and pragmatic struggles for power.

**Way of Life:** A set of social values and institutional means for a society's pursuit of goals and satisfaction of needs, together with a set of established or emerging habits of behavior corresponding to these. To be distinctive for a group of people, a way of life must include at least some major social or political values and institutions that differ from those prevailing among other groups of people.

**Welfare-Warfare State:** A state (e.g., U.S.A.) which aims both to satisfy the expanding economic appetites of an increasingly self-interested population and to achieve domination over other powers and people.

**Unity-Criticism-Unity:** The process of the members of a group, unit or organization uniting on a set of principles and objectives to struggle internally and privately among themselves by working together, observing and analyzing each other's errors and then offering constructive criticism to each other to correct errors and overcome any shortcomings in order to strengthen each other and thus advance the group towards its stated objectives. This is a continuous process of transforming old unities to new ones in a never-ending process. Any organized body must engage in principled unity, criticism and practice if it wishes to succeed in accomplishing its stated objectives.

**Vacillate:** To shuck and jive. To waiver from one side to the other.

**Value of Existing Capital:** That already invested in the means of production when newer and more modern means of production are constantly being created.

**Variable Capital:** Capital invested in labor. Only the capital invested in labor can produce varying quantities of surplus value, depending on how long and how hard one works the workers.

**Vanguard Party:** The instrument by which means the militancy and the rebellion of the revolutionary social forces can be transformed from purely reflexive,

**By Any Means Necessary:** One of Malcolm X's famous statements advocating the taking of whatever extreme actions are required to win our liberation.

**Cadre:** A nucleus of trained, experienced activists in an organization capable of assuming leadership and/or training and education, guiding others to perform functional roles in the revolution.

**Capitalism:** An economic system based upon the myth of free enterprise and private ownership of the means of production and profit. Examples of capitalist countries include the U.S.A., France, Britain and West Germany.

**Capitalist Accumulation:** The major parts of the profits derived from the exploitation of labor are reinvested in new and more advanced means of production.

**Civil Rights:** Rights that any society gives to every individual in that society if it treasures its legitimacy, its right to exist.

**Class Society:** A tier system where the people are separated into different levels of prestige based on their relationships to the means of production.

**Cliqueism:** The tendency to form into little groups based upon subjective and often opportunistic alliances, which negates overall organizational unity.

**Collective:** A cooperative unit or organization that utilizes its strength in unity to struggle for common goals and objectives.

**Colonialism:** Foreign domination of a country or people where the economic, political and military structure is controlled and run by the occupying force.

**Communism:** A social system based on collective ownership of the means of production and the absence of classes or a state apparatus.

**Constant Capital:** Capital invested in machinery whose value is simply transferred into the finished product on a per-item basis.

**Constructive Criticism:** The positive correcting and pointing out of mistaken ideas and incorrect practices; the offering of concrete practical solutions that builds instead of tears down.

**Contradiction:** The basic two-sided-ness of all things which consists of a clash between opposites; the internal struggle in all phenomena that spurs growth, development and transformation.

**Coup:** Overthrow.

**Coup D'état:** The successful overthrow of existing authority in one audacious stroke, usually by a section of the armed forces; a sudden, decisive exercise in political force, especially the violent overthrow of an existing government by a small group. This often

ians are the key to the terrorist's strategy: neither men, women, children or the handicapped are exempted. What "distinguishes" terrorism is the willful and calculated choice of innocents as targets. A guerrilla is not a terrorist, because guerrillas pit themselves against far superior combatants; but terrorists aim for "anybody except soldiers," and they attack with the specific goal of instilling fear, hoping to scare their opponents into submission.

**Theory:** Set of ideas, assumptions, and principles upon which one attempts to prove a certain conclusion.

**Totalitarianism:** A repressive form of government where strict controls on all aspects of life are imposed on the people and the regime in power has total and complete authority and say-so.

**Truth:** The laws that determine how a thing works: objective reality. Revolution is an effort to discover or create truth, not to prove what is true.

**United Front:** A long-term alliance of social classes and groups like women, queer people, youth and elders or different factions of a cultural, regional, or political space to focus on clear-cut political program.

**Unity:** The working together of two separate entities.

profit motive has been replaced with the concern for mankind.

**Status-Quo:** The present existing state of affairs; keeping things just as they are.

**Strike:** A stoppage of activity by a body of people, usually for the purpose of expressing a grievance or of forcing management to comply with their demands.

**Subjectivism:** Injecting one's emotions, passions and feelings in an analysis or decision, which results in a narrow, one-sided method of drawing a situation and all of its relating factors.

**Surplus Value:** The value which the workers produce over and above the value of their labor power: capitalist profit.

**System:** The thousands of words, objects, actions, thoughts, methods of doing things and attitudes of judgment. The "way" all these things are put together for a common goal is a system.

**Technological Development:** The level reached by science and industry as shown in what tools are produced as humans try to cope with their environment.

**Terrorism:** Terrorism is the deliberate, systematic murder, maiming, and menacing of the innocent to inspire fear and in order to gain political ends. Civil-

results in political power falling into the lap of a rival, pro-imperialist group. Another name for a coup d'etat is a putsch (or "Palace Revolution").

**Coup de Grace:** A death blow or shot administered to end the suffering of one who is mortally wounded; a decisive finishing blow or event.

**Counter Revolution:** Someone or something that goes against revolutionary principles and practices.

**Cyclical Concept of Change:** The idea that things just continue to go around in a cycle until they return to where they started; in its more modern formulation, "it has always been this way and it will always be this way."

**Democracy:** A system where the people enjoy the freedom and will to advocate for their own interest. They are actively involved in the governing process and have the right to vote, criticize and participate in the choosing of leaders, policy, and programs.

**Democratic Centralism:** The unity between freedom and discipline. Within any organization or society, you can do neither without a degree of democracy nor centralism. Under Democratic Centralism, every member of society is afforded the freedom to speak their opinion, make suggestions and criticize any errors on all levels as long as the unity and discipline of the whole is maintained. Any organized society must have rules, principles, and

guidelines within which all members of society are expected to observe and respect. Under Democratic Centralism these rules are governed by the will and imperative of the people themselves.

**Detente:** The mellowing out and relaxing of hostile and strained relationships between two or more nations.

**Dialectics:** The study of contradictions within the very essence of things. It is the scientific, analytical approach to studying contradictions within nature which takes into account the historical development and interaction of related things. Dialectics holds that nothing exists independent, isolated, or unconnected from other things; that all phenomena are connected and part of a whole system, dependent on and determined by each other. Dialectics also holds that all things are in a constant state of motion and change. Changes on a small enough level begin with a quantitative character before, after a certain point, the degree of change becomes qualitative and the thing's overall essence or character is different. These changes follow definite patterns determined by the external and internal contradictions within and surrounding objects, people and systems.

**Dogmatic:** Rigid and unbending; failing to take into account the changing conditions or the differences between one situation and another.

**Running Dog:** (Origin – Chinese) See Lackey or Ottoman. Example usage: "They were a running dog for U.S. imperialism."

**Self-Consciousness:** The capacity to reflect upon and learn from past experiences and to, out of these reflections, develop programs and plans for the future.

**Self-Criticism:** The self-conscious process of an individual or group.

**Socialism:** A social system where the means of production are owned collectively by the people through a state, where the basis for production is for the people's welfare, not profit. The people are organized on all levels of society and play an active role in the management and decision-making process. The People's right to the basic necessities of life is protected and most social services such as education, health and child care are free. The people are represented by a People's Government dedicated to upholding the principles of socialism and serving the people and humanity unselfishly, courageous of sacrifice and free from corruption. People work and contribute to society according to their needs and abilities. There is no oppressed class and the rulers are the people themselves; no huge corporations or private ownership of the means of production, industry, social services, etc. A society where the

organization of the masses in struggle and without any clear set of social objectives.

**Revolution:** A complete and radical change from one social system to another; the violent and complete struggle waged by the people to rid themselves of an oppressive system of government into a more progressive and humane society. This includes not only the political structure, but also the philosophy and ideology, mode of production, relations of production, as well as the spiritual and social mentality and outlook of society.

**Revolutionary Army:** An armed group of activists that arises from within and on the side of an oppressed group for the expressed purpose of carrying out the political tasks of a class or group, a primary one of which is to wage armed struggle to eliminate the oppressor's armed protection forces that are used to repress – by any means necessary – the revolutionary thrust of the oppressed. A revolutionary army liberates themselves and directs their destiny toward new and greater human and social relations for the oppressed and those who formerly oppressed them. Thus, the revolutionary army is distinguished from conventional armies by its members' consciousness of the army's political duty toward liberation of the people.

**Dollar Imperialism:** Sham independence whereby one country is independent in name only and often must rely on countries like the United States for economic aid, which turns the country accepting the aid into a puppet state.

**Dollar Diplomacy:** Diplomacy based solely on economic factors; diplomacy orchestrated to primarily further capitalist financial and commercial interests.

**Economics:** The study of social laws governing the production and distribution of the material means of satisfying human needs.

**Emotionalism:** The practice of acting out of passion, feelings and the spirit of the atmosphere. Spontaneity and whimsicality.

**Empire:** In these modern times it represents the highest stage of development of a capitalist nation. It is characterized by expanding spheres of influence throughout the world using military coups and financial-economic means to gain control over peoples and lands.

**Empiricism:** The practice of analyzing situations in a subjective manner based only upon individual or personal knowledge and experience, negating external investigation, history and knowledge.

**Equalitarianism:** Concepts advocating, or characterized by the belief that all people should have equal

political, social and economic rights. Alternatively spelled as "egalitarianism".

**Ethics:** The study of standards of conduct and moral judgment (moral philosophy). Deals with social relations among friends, family and associates, irrespective of citizenship.

**Exploitation:** The unjust method of using people for profit and advantage.

**External Causes:** In theories of change, a mechanical way of thinking which attributes change only to external or outside forces. Applied to human beings, it acts as a barrier to revolutionary thinking because it leads the oppressed to depend on others or on changes in external conditions to make changes in and for them.

**Fascism:** A repressive form of government that takes on police state characteristics, in that all forms of political, economic and social opposition are forcibly suppressed to maintain the status quo.

**Forces of Production:** In order to produce, instruments of production are necessary like tools, machines, means of transport, etc. But these do not produce anything by themselves. The forces of production, therefore, consist of the instruments of production as well as people, with their production experience and skill, who use these instruments.

change and actively work to prevent or destroy any progressive movement, country, etc.

**Rebellion:** An attack upon existing authority by members of an oppressed group, usually with the intention on the part of the rebels to take state power. It is usually spontaneous.

**Reformism:** The amending and making of internal changes within a system, such as by changing laws or introducing and funding poverty programs for the people without changing the whole system for what it is.

**Relations of Production:** These are relations in which people of a given society must arrange and enter into by necessity to perpetuate human existence. Since the birth of class societies, these relations have long existed where the property holders came to exercise a relationship of dominance, exploitation and wealth over the property-less. Other forms of these relations are between master and slave, feudal lord and serf, landlord and peasant, capitalist and worker, etc.

**Revisionism:** Deviation from and manipulation or modification of the correct revolutionary line (or of any particular belief or practice) to suit one's own personal vested interest.

**Revolt:** An organized attempt to seize power, usually by a section of the armed forces, without prior

**Propaganda:** The publicized activity by which the party or revolutionary organization politicizes the masses.

**Purpose:** The reason for being or doing.

**Putschism:** The negative tendency of comrades, particularly leadership, to jump into a situation issuing commands without any investigation as to the circumstances of the situation. A commandist and arrogant practice demonstrating a lack of patience and understanding.

**Putsch:** A secretly plotted and suddenly executed attempt to overthrow a government. See Coup D'etat.

**Putschist:** One who advocates or organizes a putsch.

**Quisling (kwiz-lin):** A traitor. From Vidkun Quisling, Norwegian politician in 1945. One who collaborates with the invaders of their country, especially by serving in a puppet government. Also: Quislingism.

**Racism:** The philosophy and practice which pursues or condones the systematic oppression of another race because that oppressed race is believed inferior.

**Reactionary:** Characterized by a tendency toward rolling back and repressing changes to the status quo. Includes those forces which oppose revolutionary

**Feudalism:** A repressive system of government where the common people, known as vassals, must render services to the oppressors, known as lords, in exchange for protection and use of land.

**Fifth Column:** A term applied to rebel sympathizers in Madrid in 1936 when four rebel columns were advancing in the city. It means a group of secret sympathizers or supporters of an enemy who engage in espionage or sabotage behind lines of defense or national borders.

**Freedom:** The right to understand the world, the environment and the forces acting on us with agency to deal with these circumstances so that we may harmonize as a people and develop to a higher level.

**General Contradiction of Capitalism:** Socialized (or group) labor but private ownership and profit.

**"Grasp Each End to Pull Forward the Middle":** This means, on the one hand, spending time with units which had achieved conspicuous successes, mastering their methods and helping them to advance still further. On the other hand, working with units where failures have occurred, giving them guidance and help. After the experience has been summed up, lessons are drawn and publicized for the benefit of average units — "the middle" — so that similar mistakes might be avoided and successes achieved on the broadest possible front.

**Growth and Split:** In the People's War in Vietnam, a method used for expansion where a particular unit is developed to sufficient strength and then an individual or group of individuals is detached to form the nucleus of another unit.

**Hegemony:** World wide occupation, control and manipulation by an imperialist power over underdeveloped countries through economic, military, and political domination.

**Historical Materialism:** The dialectical and materialist approach to understanding the history and development of society by examining the source and origins of social ideas, theories, political philosophies and institutions — the spiritual life of society — which is determined by the conditions of the material life of society.

**Humane:** Beliefs, thoughts, or actions that are centered on mankind and are concerned with helping all of humanity move to a higher level of development and existence.

**Humanism:** A philosophy about people that regard them as the supreme good and aim to guarantee in practice the best conditions for human happiness.

**Idealism:** The concept that states the mind is primary and matter is secondary; that all things originate from the idea and that matter is only a

terms of rules, codes, ethics, laws and statements of philosophical truths which explain all examined natural, social and universal spheres and guide human thought and action to transforming the human world for the benefit of the human being.

**Production:** The human activity which adapts natural resources to human needs. A process of acquiring the material necessities of life, e.g. food, clothing, fuel, etc.

**Progressive:** That person, organization, action, movement, phenomenon or train of events in moving/raising the human, social, economic, political, and scientific level of society; that which moves people forward into the future, away from the past.

**Proletariat:** The largest class which comprises the majority of the working masses, who must sell their labor power in order to survive. They represent the lowest level of the employed with the lowest wages, benefits and rights, who usually have little or no power or control of their working conditions, management or planning. It is the class that has the most to lose due to the advent of increased technology and automation because they are being driven out of their jobs into the ranks of the unemployed. Marx classified them as the most potentially revolutionary class because of their sheer numbers as well as their social consciousness and needs which are directly tied to the whole process of production.

**Petit-Bourgeoisie:** The middle class or privileged worker who enjoys a relatively comfortable level of existence: the small businessmen, entrepreneurs and self-employed. Artists, entertainers, doctors, lawyers, and athletes being to this class. They do not own or control the major means of production but their main aspiration is to obtain the status, wealth and power of the bourgeoisie.

**Philistine:** A person regarded as smugly narrow and conventional in their views and tactics, lacking in and indifferent to cultural and aesthetic values, etc. Bourgeois and materialistic.

**Philosophy:** World outlook; how one perceives, understands and interprets life in general. A method of understanding the world history, contradictions and development of things.

**Policy:** The objectives and goals which a group (organization, state, nation, international organization) sets for itself, plus the means adopted toward the postulated goal.

**Politics:** A process by which the political and social decisions involving the organization of society are made and the method of solving political contradictions.

**Principles:** The fundamental grounds on which a human being, organization, movement, cause or concept stands. Its basic aspects are expressed in

reflection of what exists in the mind, as one perceives it. In idealism, the physical world can only be conceived as relative to or dependent on mental image.

**Ideology:** A system set on principles and beliefs relating to life, culture, politics, etc. Integrated assertions, theories, and aims that constitute a sociopolitical program.

**Ideological Struggle:** The conflict, fought through rhetoric and practice rather than physical aggression, between different ideologies in trying to prove themselves correct and those opposing incorrect.

**Imperialism:** The exploitation, rape, and subsequent oppression practiced by one nation over another for greed and profit. The extension of capitalism into the international arena.

**Individualism:** A narrow, selfish approach or outlook based upon putting oneself before the interest of the people, organization, and comrades. A bourgeois tendency expressed in the "bootstrap" theory.

**Initiative:** The self-reliant exercising of one's imagination, creativity and will to tackle all problems and fervently develop new strategies and programs; being in the forefront and taking the lead, i.e., to "Seize the Time."

**Insurrection:** A concentrated attack upon existing authority by members of an oppressed group, usually with the intention of taking power (if only temporarily) during the course of revolutionary struggle, or at the culmination of a process of revolutionary struggle.

**Irresponsible Criticism:** Frivolous and irrelevant correcting or pointing out of minor and needless points, which instead of building tears down and obstructs progressive growth and development; nit-picking which tends to sidetrack one from what really has to be done; ungrounded and unfounded criticism; criticizing without investigation and thinking first.

**Islam:** Way of life that instructs total submission and obedience to Allah, Creator of the universe and all therein. The scientific and practical, economic, social, cultural and military life of all true Muslims (believers). The laws and doctrines of Islam are explicitly laid out in the Holy Qur'an and through the Sunnah (the traditions of the Holy Prophet — peace be upon him).

**State Islam:** A system of government based upon the belief in one God. State Islam is structured under the universal principles of the Holy Quran.

**Juche:** In the socialist revolution of Korea, the principle that a people must rely primarily on their own creativity, human power and natural resources to advance their liberation.

U.S.A., or a citizen of the People's Republic of New Afrika (The Black Belt Region).

**New International:** The growing body of developing nations representing a revolutionary humanist force of billions, which imperialism cannot destroy short of atomic warfare powerful enough to destroy the entire planet.

**New Man/Woman/Person:** One who is politically conscious, creative, and socially responsible. One who puts politics in command of economics and will always work together for the best interest of their community.

**Objectivism:** The method of analysis which takes into account the entirety of the situation. Approaching a situation open-mindedly, wholly and completely without prejudice.

**Oppression:** Unjust and cruel exercise of authority to deny people their human rights and their right to a decent, healthy life. Intolerable living conditions such as inadequate health, education, medical care, housing, etc.

**Organic Composition of Capital:** The changing proportion of capital invested in labor compared to that invested in machinery.

**Ottoman:** Footstool.

e.g., to bring about revolutionary advancement to the evolution of humankind.

**Morale:** The moral or mental condition of the individual or group with respect to courage, discipline, confidence, enthusiasm, and willingness to endure hardship or sacrifice.

**Morality:** The code of human conduct with set standards for the individual or groups in relation to other individuals and groups. Differing from custom, it implies consciousness (conscious recognition) or acceptance of a desirable value.

**Neo-Colonialism:** Foreign domination of a country or people by an imperialist power where the economic, political, and military structure is run by a native bourgeoisie. The imperialists maintain control of the economy because they continue to own the means of production, and the client state is totally dependent, military and politically, on the imperialists for their survival.

**(Domestic) Neo-Colonialism:** The use of "Black faces in high places", as a cover for white power is Neo-Colonialism. Neo-Colonialism domestically simply means that direct white power in its own name is replaced by indirect white power or white power in the name and shape of Black people.

**New Afrikan:** Revolutionary national identity of the Afro-American or Black person born within the

**Lackey:** A flunky or footman. Also: to wait upon or serve slavishly.

**Liberation:** The state of freedom from a repressive or exploitative existence, where the people have gained control of their own lives and the right to self-determination.

**Lumpenproletariat:** The underclass, unemployed, marginally employed and those who live outside of the law such as the "criminal" element. The aged, infirm and disabled are also part of this class because they are marginally employed and therefore not a secure part of the productive process. Those on welfare and social security are also members of this class.

**Machine Politics:** Typical of a highly organized political organization called a "machine." "The Machine" is ruthless, impersonal, interested only in results rather than in forums or programs and political ideology. Usually under the command of a boss. Spoils, favors, and patronage supply the "oil" for the machine and ruthless, often lawless men the "muscle." (The politics of mayors Daley and Rizzo are examples.)

**Managerial Class:** The managers of the capitalist enterprises and institutions who are involved in the day to day running of affairs, i.e. government officials, politicians, judges, corporate executives, etc.

**Mass Line:** The political guiding principle of a revolutionary organization that must provide concrete programs for the systematic transformation stage of the oppressed masses through collective struggle.

**Materialism:** The concept that matter is primary and that the world is material. All ideas and theories are secondary or subject to the interaction of mass in the material world. Matter and nature are objective reality existing outside and independent of our mind. Matter is primary because it is the source of ideas, sensations and consciousness. The idea is secondary and derivative because it is a reflection of matter and varies by individual perception. The only real objective reality is the material world, i.e. physical matter.

**Means of Production:** The means by which capitalism, for example, undertakes production: normally including factories, industrial plants in which to produce, machinery and tools with which to fashion raw materials, and the new materials themselves, including auxiliary materials such as fuel and oil.

**Metaphysics:** Spookism. That which exists outside of reality and cannot be perceived by the five senses. This concept states that the idea is the only true and permanent reality. Knowledge derived from acceptance of preexisting ideas is the only genuine and valid wisdom, e.g. religion, which is based on the belief of Divine Word.

**"Mind Behind the Gun":** (Vietnamese) This means that propaganda must precede organization of the oppressed masses into physical bases or units of armed struggle. Only when a people have been imbued with a new vision of themselves in a new political role can they exercise, to the fullest, their specially humane qualities of will and courage, of initiative and ingenuity, of intelligence and skill, and of creativity and unity.

**Mode of Production:** The way in which people produce and exchange their means of life. Every society is based on this, which ultimately determines the character of all social activities and institutions. The mode of production is always social, for the material goods required by the community are produced by the labor of many, who carry on a mutual exchange of activities in producing the social product which is distributed among the community. The forces of production enter into certain relations of production in order for the forces of production to be applied according to the different relations of production. Examples: Slavery, Feudalism, Capitalism, Socialism, Communism.

**Mojo:** An Afro-American term meaning magic powers of influence. In a political sense it means the magical hands of the people; their power to define political, social, economic, spiritual, and military phenomena and make change in a desired manner —